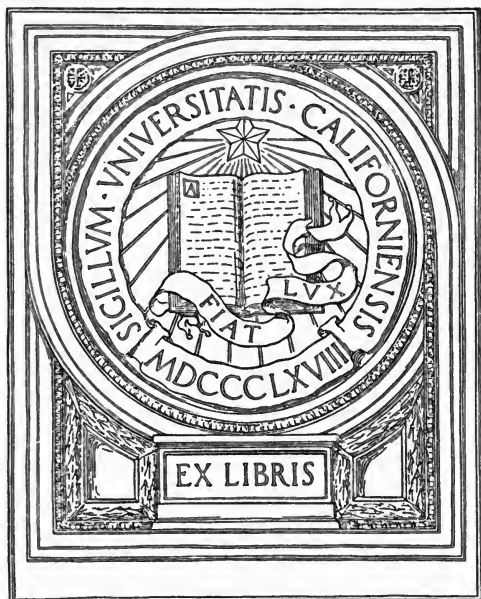


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SONNETS AND SHORT POEMS

BY

MAURICE BARING

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SONNETS
AND
SHORT POEMS

BY
MAURICE BARING

AUTHOR OF "GASTON DE FOIX," "WITH THE RUSSIANS IN MANCHURIA"

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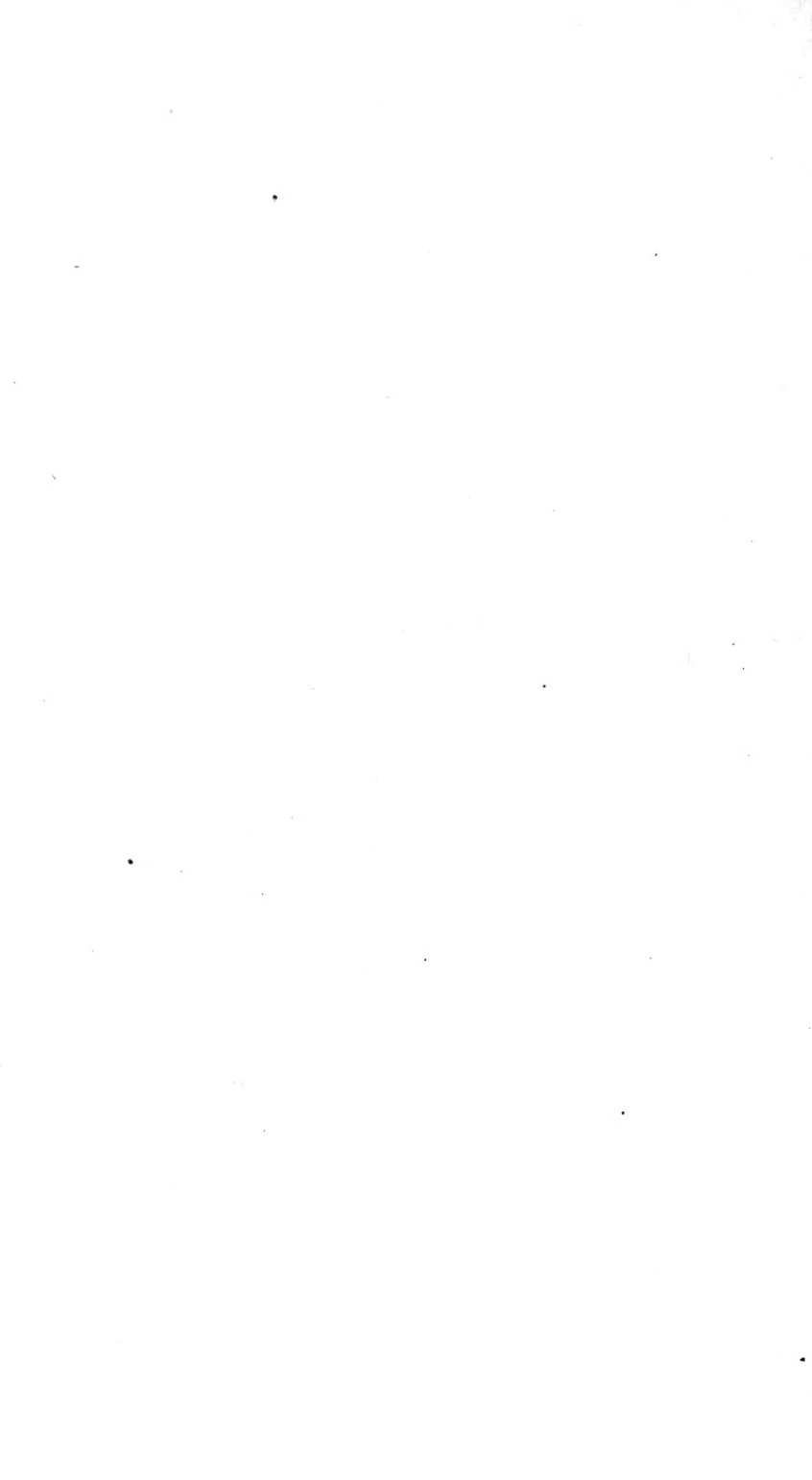
1906

MILUKOV LIBRARY

TO MR. J. M. J.
ALABAMA

To
HILAIRE BELLOC

878557



NOTE.

THE poems which I have collected in this volume have for the greater part appeared before. Some of them were published in a book called "The Black Prince," published by Mr. John Lane; three of the sonnets appeared in the "Westminster Gazette"; two of the lyrics in a play called "Mahasena," published by Mr. Blackwell. I take this opportunity of thanking the proprietors concerned for the kind permission granted me to reprint the poems in question.

M. B.

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SONNETS

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EXILE.

To A. P.

THEY with the world would have you reconciled,
Outgrow the impulse of these fantasies,
These rebel storms ; and act in grown-up wise.
They know not ; in your mother's arms you smiled ;

And yet your soul with timeless memories
Was sad ; and when old age shall claim you, child,
Your heart with young despair shall still be wild
And childish mirth shall still light up your eyes.

Because a banished spirit in you dwells,
That strayed from lands beyond the unfurrowed sea,
And frets rejecting its captivity ;

You hear the horns of the forbidden chase,
The happy ghosts that down the woodland race
And gallop through the trampled asphodels.

1905.

“QUAND VOUS SEREZ BIEN VIEILLE.”

WHEN you are old, no man will start to hear
That you were once more lovely than the day ;
Old age may change but cannot take away
From you ; and you will meet him without fear.

Yet when you think of him who loved fair things
And singing of all beauty sang but you,
Nor dreamed you guessed the secret of his strings,
Then say : “ Although he knew it not, I knew.”

I shall be dead and mid the shadowy throng
In the long twilight I shall not forget ;—
You still shall tread the earth with royal grace ;

And if you smile remembering my song,
A moonbeam to the kingdoms of regret
Will come and flood with light the sunless place.

WE drifted to each other like two birds,
That meet high in the windy middle air,
Then fly away again ; each unaware
That there had passed between us silent words.

Then like two pilgrims, tired and travel-sore
We sought for shelter from the rising tide
Of night, in the dark hollow mountain-side,
And, mutually remembering, met once more.

But when the morning came and we looked down
Upon the glittering cities of the plain,
We lingered in the lonely crag content ;—

The world which cannot know the hills will frown ;—
But very blissful is the banishment
In the high pinnacles of wind and rain.

You walked into the temple of a soul ;
You scanned the height, the depth, and each recess ;
You praised the silvery sombre loveliness ;
You heard the multitudinous organ roll.

Behind the towering altar, sad and pale,
An angel stood and uttered mournful sighs ;
And, answering the question in your eyes,
The angel pointed to a hanging veil.

You tore aside the veil, a dreadful gleam
Revealed the sights you had not feared to see,
And a great darkness fell upon the shrine.

You wept, but not your pain nor the lost dream
You pitied ; but that this sad thing should be ;—
And then once more the temple shone divine.

TO E. S.

YOUR singing brings the rustle of the trees,
The tall trees sighing on the mountain-side ;
It brings a whisper from the foamless tide
That broadening fills the ample estuaries.

Your singing brings the freshness of the breeze
That comes at twilight to the breathless plain ;
The cry of moaning ghosts that call in vain
From wandering prisons in the winds and seas.

Your singing brings to me the final peace,
Dissolves the torment of perplexity
And guides my spirit to a tranquil home ;—

And when the moon compels the storm to cease
And calms the wind ; and all the skeins of foam
Unravel softly on the vanquished sea.

You were the Queen of evening, and the skies
Were soft above you, knowing you were fair,
The dewy gold of sunset in your hair,
And twilight in the stillness of your eyes.

You did not know your dear divinity,
And childlike, all unconscious that you walked
High in celestial air, you smiled and talked,
And stooped to pluck a rose, and gave it me.

As at the gate of heaven an angel-child
Might wonder at an outcast's pleading gaze,
An outcast kneeling at the golden bars,

And say : " Come, be my playmate, here the days
Are longer, and the ways outside are wild,
And you shall play with suns and silver stars."

ON WATTS' PICTURE OF PAOLO AND
FRANCESCA.

To A. V. M.

THOUGH borne like withered leaves upon a stream,
Faded and dead, they would not live again,
Nor, in the hard world, face the wiles of men ;
Their past is but the haunting of a dream.

And yet they would not sleep in asphodel,
Nor, for without remorse is their regret,
Drink deep of bliss and utterly forget ;
Not for all Heaven would they exchange their Hell.

And they give thanks because their punishment
Is sealed and sure, because their doom shall be
To go in anguish through Eternity,

Together on the never-resting air.
Beyond all happiness is their content
Who know there is no end to their despair.

OXFORD, 1897.

SHALL I pretend that I no more perceive
The peerless worth of your high qualities ?
And say your precious words are honeyed lies
Which my conceit compels me to believe ;

And vow your lips divinely do deceive ;
Call false the unclouded earnest of your eyes
And artificial the pure tears that rise,
When you take pity and with passion grieve ?

Shall I foreswear my faith in Truth and Right ?
Acknowledge only God's black cruelty ?
Yet if I bow to an impious might,

More great and blind my faith in you must be ;
For you are Heaven and Hell and Day and Night,
And Sun and Moon and Providence to me.

*"To that high capital where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay."*—SHELLEY.

To E. M.

THE silver angel with sad wings *L sable*
Flew down to meet her in the dewy field,
And broke her happy song half-way, and sealed
Her singing with the kiss of silent things,

And bade her seek the dark and banished land.
She did not raise wet, wistful eyes, nor pray
With outstretched arms for one, for one more day,
But to his shining hands she gave her hand.

She looked not back though she remembered much,
But steadfastly she climbed the darkling stair,
And followed firm the strange and glistening touch,
Till in the whiteness of the silent hall,
Over her frozen eyes and faded hair,
Queenlike she bound the scarlet coronal.

HILDESHEIM, 1895.

ΛΕΙΠΙΟΕΣΣΑ ΚΑΛΤΕ.

To E. W. G.

SHE listened to the music of the spheres ;
 We thought she did not hear our happy strings ;
 Stars diademed her hair in misty rings,
 And all too late we knew those stars were tears.

Without she was a temple of pure snow,
 Within were piteous flames of sacrifice ;
 And underneath the dazzling mask of ice
 A heart of swiftest fire was dying slow.

She in herself, as lonely lilies fold
 Stiff silver petals over secret gold,
 Shielded her passion, and remained afar

From pity. Cast red roses on the pyre !
 She that was snow shall rise to Heaven as fire
 In the still glory of the morning star.

I DREAMED that I was lifted to the skies
And found her in the starless end of space ;
There was no smile of welcome on her face,
There were no tears in her immortal eyes,

She did not recollect nor recognise ;
But comfort, like a dawn, then seemed to break ;
I said, " It is a dream, I shall awake
And find her turning earth to Paradise."

I wake, and know that nothing can restore
My dearest to the Earth, to sight and sound ;
I know that I no longer hope to soar

And find her shining at the heavenly bound.
She is of yesterday for evermore ;
All my to-days are buried in the ground.

AND now the first cold numbness of the blow
Is past, past also is the secret smart ;
The dizzy panic of the helpless heart,
And the rebellious tears have ceased to flow.

Now all the world stands out distinct and sad,
And laughter rings more hollow and more vain ;
Grief seems more palpable, more plenteous pain,
And the mad strife grows hour by hour more mad.

Now I can say : " Thank God she is not here,
Thank God that yonder safe upon the shore
She sleeps beneath the cold and boundless night,
And hears the wailing of the waves no more,
Nor moan of men, in careless fortune's might,
Who cry for help and as they cry despair."

AFTER SEEING "ROMEO AND JULIET."

A TRAGEDY? Yes, for the ancient foes,
When fateful friendship sealed their perished feud,
Not tragic for the wooer and the wooed
Was life's untimely, undividing close.

The timorous maid aroused by love arose
A fearless wife. The idler who pursued
His glittering aims, a vain and petty brood,
Through love attained to manhood and repose.

So two transfigured natures blent in one,
And this full, perfect, passionate unity,
For rough and dusty Earth too bright and high,

Sank in great calm, as dreaming unison
Of darkness and midsummer sound must die
Before the daily duty of the Sun.

HILDESHEIM, 1892.

O STAR of dawn, descended from the spheres,
From space of gold and snow and flaming zone ;
Princes there were enough among your peers
To live and love and die for you alone.

You were the Goddess of a guarded shrine,
I was the beggar lingering at the gate ;
You left behind the pomp and solemn state,
You sought the Earth discrowned and twice divine.

Now you have laid aside your diadem,
And bound wild roses in your royal hair,
And I may kiss your shining garment's hem.

Truly my soul has scaled the rainbow stair ;
The world lies glistening like a fiery gem,
And all the stars are singing in the air.

SHE is a vessel of mysterious snow,
A water-lily anchored in dark reeds,
That in the evening's violet afterglow
Unfolds its hidden heart of flaming seeds.

She has the halo of the lonely moon,
And round her floats the jessamin's faint musk,
With summer birds and bees she is in tune
And silvery moths and the delirious dusk.

In the green twilight of her leafy bower
She gave me water from a whispering well,
And there, a secret sun, she shone for me.

Now I am banished from the ecstasy,
Her face has filled the imperishable hour,
Sways like a phantom moon my soul in Hell.

OH! something less than words, and something more
I'd need if I would write for you ; the spell
That bids the wandering sounds in concord soar
And opens wide the gates of Heaven and Hell.

Then would I write you a sad melody,
That only tells the loneliness forlorn
It found in the dark heart where it was born,
Yet speaks the groaning world's whole misery.

Rising, it shakes the burden from its wings
And soars triumphant to the sky and sings ;
The veil is rent ; the clouds are scattered far ;

The listening soul drinks in a flood of light
And swims into the stillness infinite,
Constant, eternal, one with sun and star.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

WE have been loosened from the bonds of time
And space in vain divides us. Near or far,
Absent, you shine before me like a star ;
The hours when you are with me cease to chime.

Sadness we know but not satiety ;
We heed no march of seasons short or long,
O'erwhelmed and deafened by the tides of song,
Which roll increasing from eternity.

For us the glory of the day is done ;
And sunset melts in a long silvery dream
Of darkness luminous with peace and dew ;

We float, like ghosts upon death's endless stream,
In bliss ; for only one soft unison
Breathes in the empty vastness : I and you.

DEMOPHÖON.

WE shall not look upon his face again ;
The wanderer will return to us no more.
Brief was the stay ! Yet how could he remain ?
His soul was native to the ghostly shore.

The shadows of dominions huge and dim,
The scent of alien meadows far away,
The breeze that blows from Lethe followed him,
Home-sick for night, and weary of the day.

And found he peace in lands beyond the sun ?
The stillness that he craved, the dreamless home ?
Or stands he now beside the calling foam,
Still waiting till at last the sail shall gleam
And bear him from the place of dusk and dream
To the full harbours of oblivion ?

AFFINITY.

WE drift apart, nor can we quite forget ;—
Some link is lost ; and that affinity,
That binds us not and will not set us free,
Still tinges all our friendship with regret.

And now I feel our hearts at last have met
In perfect tune ; that God made you for me
And me for you ; and now that He has set
This veil between us, this mute mystery.

Yet when I wash away the dust of earth,
In the cool kingdoms of celestial dew,
I think that you will meet me with a smile,
The old smile made undying with new birth ;
And I'll say this : " I loved you all the while."
And you will say : " I loved you and I knew."

PRAYER.

I DARE not pray to thee, for thou art won
Rarely by those by whom thou hast been wooed ;
Thou comest unsolicited, unsued,
Like sudden splendours of the midnight sun.

Yet in my heart the hope doth still abide
That thou hast haply heard my unbreathed prayer ;
That in the stifling moment of despair,
I will turn round and find thee by my side.

Like a sad pilgrim who has wandered far,
And hopes not any longer for the day,
But blinded by black thickets finds no way,

Comes to a rift of trees in that sad plight,
And suddenly sees the unending aisles of night
And in the emerald gloom the morning star.

THE DEAD SAMURAI TO DEATH.

To E. C.

I HAD not called nor prayed for thee to come ;
No favour of the Fates I bent to ask,
I thought but of the momentary task :
In the supreme bright hour my soul was dumb.

Yet above all the rest 'twas here and now
I longed to meet with thee, O beckoning friend ;
Before the lightning of thine eyes to bow
And follow thee to where the triumphs end.

Therefore let those who gaze upon me here
Discern no sadness in my staring eyes
And no regret, they will not look for fear.

I dared not hope to meet thee in this place ;
Then let my smile speak rapture and surprise
And with ineffable wonder stamp my face.

POUTILOFF'S HILL,

October 17, 1904.

THE DYING RESERVIST.

To B. C.

I SHALL not see the faces of my friends,
Nor hear the songs the rested reapers sing
After the labours of the harvesting,
In those dark nights before the summer ends ;

Nor see the floods of spring, the melting snow,
Nor in the autumn twilight hear the stir
Of reedy marshes, when the wild ducks whirl
And circle black against the afterglow.

My mother died ; she shall not have to weep ;
My wife will find another home ; my child,
Too young, will never grieve or know ; but I
Have found my brother, and contentedly
I'll lay my head upon his knees and sleep.
O brother Death,—I knew you when you smiled.

THE WOUNDED.

To H. C.

THEY turn us from the long-desired door ;
Here there is shelter for the sorely spent,
But not for us ; since many a dying score
Of maimed and mangled men, whose limbs are rent
With bayonet and with bullet, crowd the floor.
We who have fought since dawn, nor tasted bread,
Although our wounds are slight, our wounds are sore,
We must march on, nor shall we find a bed.

O men, O brothers, is our rest not earned ?
Shall we not seek the mountains huge and wide
Whose doors are always open ? There the guest
Sweet welcome finds ; for thou hast never turned
A stranger from thy gates, nor hast denied,
O hospitable Death, a place to rest.

FUN-CHU-LING,

October 16, 1904.

My love is glad and strong as the salt sea ;
Thou art the moon above it, singly bright.
Thou shalt discern me thus in thy pure might ;
Thus fathomless and wide my love shall be.

And vast and dim with a green world of waves,
And rich with hidden pearls and purple weeds,
And derelict hulls and wrecks of perished deeds,
And sunken gold and sapphire-pillared caves.

But all this huge tumultuous element
Shall whisper like a woodland stream, and sleep
Calm as a slumbering child ; shall smile and weep
In dreams of bliss,—obedient, soft and still ;
For thou, my moon, from thy dark firmament
Upon this sea shalt write thy silver will.

ST. PETERSBURG, 1906.

VALE.

I AM for ever haunted by one dread
That I may suddenly be swept away ;
Nor be vouchsafed to see you and to say
Goodbye ; then this is what I would have said :

I have loved summer and the longest day ;
The leaves of June, the slumberous film of heat ;
The bees, the swallow, and the waving wheat ;
The whistling of the mowers in the hay.

I have loved words which lift the soul with wings ;
Words that are windows to eternal things ;
I have loved souls that to themselves are true,
Who cannot stoop and know not how to fear,
Yet hold the talisman of pity's tear :
I have loved these because I have loved you.

LONDON, 1905.

"Parceque c'était elle; parceque c'était moi."

THAT skies and hills and seas and all things blue
Are bluer for the light which filled your eyes,
That nature's treasure-house of harmonies
Is richer for the music that was you,

Comforts me not; nor yet the word sublime
That speaks of the unknown immensity,
Where we shall meet and understand, set free
Forever from the bonds of space and time.

You were a summer's day, all warmth and tune;
Your soul a harbour, dark beneath the moon,
And flashing with soft lights of sympathy;—

But oh! the seal of grief more than these things
Is the old phrase that now so sadly rings:
That you were you, and I, alas! am I.

ST. PETERSBURG, 1906.

SHORT POEMS

SONG.

IN Paradise we are,
We cannot hear, nor feel
The noise of the world's wheel;
We float from star to star.

It was the Spring to-day
On earth, you came to me
Beside a hawthorn tree,
Through the white flowers of May

But in the dazzling sphere
Oh! whence the tear that stings?
Oh! whence these icy wings?
Sorrow, why art thou here?

SONG.

THE sky is stormy and red ;
The wanderer comes from the west,
He knocks at the door and dread
Knocks at the heart in my breast ;
Wanderer, what is thy quest ?

Worse than the battle and rout
Is the icy dwelling within ;
Empty and full of the shout
Of the mirthless laughter of sin ;
Wanderer, stay thou without !

DIRGE FOR A POET.

I PONDER on a broken lute,
The fragment of a song,
And wonder if the soul be mute,
Or if a heavenly throng
Of harmonies and mighty themes
Proclaim his interrupted dreams.

The wistful thought, the hidden fire,
The darkling prophecies,
The passion and the brave desire
That lit his startled eyes ;
Oh ! will that broken music reach
Through large fulfilment unto speech ?

And shall I meet him once again
Upon the endless way ?
East of the sun, where gleams the plain
That knows not night nor day ;
And in the calm untroubled land
Will his wild spirit understand ?

Like some soft fiery cloud that soars
At sunset o'er the snow,
He sought the pale unearthly shores
Beyond the western glow ;
And sank into the wave of night
Before he reached the crimson light.

Perchance to-morrow's western wind
May bear to oceans dim,
Mysterious clouds incarnadined,
But never one like him.
Shall nature stop the march of spheres
Because of a few foolish tears ?

Once only nature breathes each note
That builds the song of time :
No more across the skies will float
That tender sunset chime.
I loved ; and in the eastern skies
A million morning stars arise.

CIRCE.

To R. B.

No more shall the sad, fallen Gods be seen ;
 Weary of exile in the sullen world,
Forgotten by the thankless mortal race ;
 They recollect the glory that has been ;
 Olympus once with starry snow impearled
Haunts and derides them in their chill disgrace,
And thus they seek the dark and dreamless place.

Some linger yet, and in the Tuscan hills,
 Where the pink rose-bush fringes the green corn,
The swallows hear the song of Proserpine ;
 And oft Apollo with a glory fills
 A church on some Sicilian shore, forlorn,
Where none but lovers seek the ruined shrine ;
But lovers know and praise the light divine.

Circe abides in her enchanted home,
The rainbow circle of an opal isle,
Set in a ghostly sea where no wind blows ;
Yet few can find that faery bell of foam.

And oft when through the night, a weary while,
Pilgrims have laboured, as the morning glows,
It blossoms in the East, a pearly rose.

Yet Circe too is changed, a listless shade
Of her who paced before the golden loom ;
For she has felt the waving of Death's wings,
A pale immortal flower, she fain would fade ;
Her life is dusk that deepens not to gloom ;
Dumbly she feels the sharp regret that stings
The darkened soul, the lapse of mortal things.

Hushed is the music of the haunted well,
Unvexed by sighing ghosts her woodland ways ;
For Circe has renounced her perilous wand ;
Nor seeks to capture men with any spell.
They do but drink the pity of her gaze,
They feel the solace of her flower-like hand,
And dwell a moment in her still strange land.

There in the emerald evening she bestows
A silent pitying audience on her slaves ;
And thence they sail into a wide despair ;
Around her isle dark vapours seem to close,
Before them lie unending wastes of waves,
And dazed they think the vision blest and fair
Was but a mirage of the mocking air.

Henceforth as men that dream a lustrous dream
Which lingers through the brightness of the day
And clings like subtle scent of herb or flower,
They cannot but recall the halcyon gleam
Of that green island in the world grown grey ;
They see the pale witch in her dusky bower,
Like a tall lily in the twilight hour.

And some set sail and seek her isle once more
Toiling until they sink into their grave ;
But no man twice fulfils the phantom quest.
And some await upon the desolate shore
A pilot star to point across the wave,
The sunset isle they find not in the West,
Till Death upon their tir'd eyes sheddeth rest.

But Circe watches from her jasmine throne,
And when at sunset the dark waters shine,
A sound of sighing trembles in the breeze ;
The west wind brings the wistful pilgrims' moan,
And Circe scans far on the dim sky-line
The white sails of unnumbered argosies,
Like flakes of snow upon the crimson seas.

1899.

SONG.

I do not bid thee linger here,
The lark is in the sky.
So say farewell, without a tear,
Begone, without a sigh.
Thy way is parted from my way,
We'll meet not till the Judgment Day.

O Wanderer, where shalt thou be
When the long battle's fought ?
To-night, at set of sun, for me
Thou shalt not have a thought.
New battles wait thee, thou must roam ;
No rest for thee, nor any home.

The summer day is hot and long,
Yet shall it fade away ;
Evening shall come, and twilight song
After the summer day ;
And night, the night which bringeth sleep
To all who wander and who weep.

BLOSSOM.

To A. C. B.

THE angel of the Annunciation came,
And breathed upon the consecrated earth,
And lit within its frozen heart a flame ;
For in the night the miracle of birth
Crept trembling through the conscious fields and trees.
With the first shiver of the April morn,
What stranger grace and new ?
It was the fragrance of the dawn's cool breeze ;—
The world, awakening through its tears of dew,
Smiled, for in darkness blossom had been born.
As though the dawn had flung to earth her veil,
The dew-drenched blossom trembles in the sun ;
More soft than snow, and a mirage, and frail,
It hangs in films that blush, divinely spun.
What silent plotting powers have planned this sight ?
It is as though the never-resting loom
Of time had ceased to ply ;
And the thin web of hours had taken flight
Before the advent of Eternity,—
As darkness, when the dawn breaks into bloom.

But ah ! that vision is a wistful smile
 Upon the cheating features of the hour ;
 Earth toils in travail, beauty is born, awhile
 To shine with flame, to wither like a flower.
 Man, that has fashioned of his hand and brain,
 Foam out of marble, bronze of sound and song,
 Sees the immortal dream
 Rise like the blossom, like the blossom wane ;
 And on the moving surface of Time's stream
 Its life is neither briefer nor more long.

Sorrow descends upon the mortal sight,
 Sorrow for beauty of fair things that fade,
 Till one strong thought consoles the hopeless night,
 That from the wealth of God, where worlds are made,
 (The Treasure-house that nothing can decrease),
 A never-ending tide shall ebb and flow ;
 The note must sound and die,—
 The eternal symphony shall never cease ;
 Divinely made, thought, shape and melody
 Shall come like blossom and like blossom go.

ROME, 1903.

SIGURD'S SONG.

AWAKE! awake! the sunlight and the lark
Have chased away the shadows; the wild bees
Are flying to the fragrant forest. Hark!
The cuckoo calls thee to the dew-drenched trees!

Awake! forget the visions of the dark!
Drink in the sunshine and the morning breeze;
The apple boughs are white with blossom. Hark!
The cuckoo calls thee to the dew-drenched trees!

Awake! awake! upon the grass the mark
Of footsteps wet with foam of faery seas
Shall lead thee to the silver orchard. Hark!
The cuckoo calls thee to the dew-drenched trees!

FAREWELL ! this is the last, the saddest tryst ;
For I am of the valley and the plain,
And thou art for the mountains and the mist ;
Farewell ! for we shall never meet again.

Thou shalt forget the swearing of thine oath ;
Thou wast the wind and I the bending tree !
Alas ! I am the rock and thou the froth
That lightly comes and goes upon the sea.

Farewell ! thy path is to the rising sun,
And in the shadows I shall wait in vain ;
For what is done can never be undone,
And joy to me shall never come again.

BALLAD.

I saw a sail upon the grey sea ;
 (The wind is sad and the wind is loud) ;
Oh ! when shall my true-love come to me,
 Out of the night and driving cloud ?

I saw three maidens work at a loom ;
 (The wind is sad and the wind is loud) ;
“ What weave ye, maidens, with threads of doom ? ”
 “ For him who fell in the fight a shroud.”

I saw black wings in the summer sky ;
 (The wind is sad and the wind is loud) ;
He heareth not my voice when I cry ;
 He has forgotten the vows he vowed.

I saw on the sand a track of blood ;
 (The wind is sad and the wind is loud) ;
He lay asleep by the rolling flood ;
 His limbs were stiff and his head was bowed.

CHANDRA.

To H.

(1)

SHE is not wrought of perishable clay,
But of some delicate essence thin and rare,
Some texture whereof iris-dews are made,
Or wings of dragon-flies or petals of foam,
Or the frail, iridescent, floating shell.
In vain we liken her to star or flower ;
Fairer is she than earthly semblances.
She is a spirit wandered from the moon ;—
A sigh, a melody made palpable.
She moves as though she floated o'er the flowers,
And the earth seems to fawn beneath her feet.
And the sky seems to crown her as a Queen.

SOSNOFKA, 1903.

CHANDRA.

(2)

LIKE far-seen palms in the desert air,
 Like phantom isles hung over the seas,
 Like glistening haze in the noontide's glare,
 Or webs of silver on twilight trees :
 So thou seemest, a film of light,
 A baseless dream which at dawn must die ;
 Like dew of the morn or the snowflake bright,—
 Child of the moon descend from the sky.

Come, for the darkness has risen from earth,
 And the moon has breathed o'er the sleeping sea ;
 We are weary of toil, we are sated with mirth,
 We are fain to dream, and our dream is of thee.
 The moon and the stars and the lotus flower,
 The lilies and dusk are of no avail,
 For thou art the dream of the twilight hour
 And lotus and lily, O fair ! O frail !

SONG.

To hide my sorrow's secret smart,
I often laugh till it breaks my heart ;
When love is dead and despair has come,
It is best for lips to be sealed and dumb ;
When Love is dead, and Death is nigh,
'Tis best to stifle memory.
Nothing can quicken the withered flower,
Never returns the once vanished hour ;
My heart is dead and my tears are dry,
'Tis best to stifle memory.

1901.

BALLAD.

To N.

THE roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun,
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

All clad in golden armour
To fight the Saladin,
He left me in my garden
To weep, to sing and spin.

When fell the dewy twilight
I heard the wicket grate,
There came a ghost who shivered
Beside my garden gate.

All clad in golden armour,
But dabbled with red dew;
He did not lift his vizor,
And yet his face I knew.

And when he left my garden
The roses all were red
And dyed in a fresh crimson ;
Only my heart was dead.

The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun ;
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

COPENHAGEN, 1901.

THE day breaks and the darkness taketh flight,
The north wind blows upon the rippling sea ;
My locks are dripping with the dews of night.
My Dawn, my Daylight, open thou to me.

The spices of thy garden fill the air,
The blossom glistens on thine apple-tree ;
Sweeter than spice art thou, than flowers more fair.
My Dew, my Blossom, open thou to me.

Come, let us seek the mountains of the myrrh,
The hills of frankincense, the fragrant sea,
The north wind blows, the leaves, the water stir.
My Dove, my Springtide, open thou to me.

SONG.

To C. L.

THE corn is garnered, the swallows fly,
The leaves fall soft on their wintry bed.
There was a dream in the summer sky,
And song, as soft as a rose's sigh.
Why should I linger ? the dream has fled,
The song is silent, the rose is dead,

The ghost of the rose is in the air,
The dead song speaks in the moaning sea ;
After the dream is the long despair,
The endless dusk and the unheard prayer :
"O Death come quickly and set me free,
My friend is no longer kind to me."

SOSNOFKA, 1902.

BALLAD.

MINE eyes are dim and my wound is sore,
White sail, will you come to me ?
My Friend, shall I never see thee more ?
Be still, O moaning sea.

Have you forgotten the cup of bliss ?
White sail, will you come to me ?
On the flying ship, and the first long kiss ?
Be still, O moaning sea.

Have you forgotten the forest trees ?
White sail, will you come to me ?
The vows we spoke to the stars and seas ?
Be still, O moaning sea.

I sought you once in a strange disguise ;
White sail, will you come to me ?
You knew not even my sad, sad eyes ;
Be still, O moaning sea.

"Call when you will, I'll come," you said ;
 White sail, will you come to me ?
Come swiftly, or you will find me dead ;
 Be still, O moaning sea.

The sail is black, they have hauled it high ;
 White sail, you came not to me ;
I'll turn my face to the wall and die ;
 Be still, O moaning sea.

O Iseult, my life, my death, my friend !
 White sail, there's no need for thee ;
I waited for you until the end . . .
 Still is the moaning sea.

SONG.

(From a Play.)

OH! fill the cup and strike the strings,

And crown me with bright flowers ;

My heart is like a bird that sings

In dark midsummer hours ;

He knows the joy must quickly fade

But sings his rapture unafraid.

A hope, a dream, a mute desire,

That never could avail ;

A wasted sacrifice of fire

Is all my song, my tale ;

Now, like the dreams of summer night

When comes the dawn, the song takes flight.

I perish for a prayer, a gleam

Of hope that soared too high ;

But since, most dear, you were my dream,

What can death signify ?

A song shall be my latest breath,

Triumphant now I go to death.

SIGURD



SIGURD.

To E. P. D.

THE king of men and heroes lay asleep,
Lulled by the murmurs of an inland sea.
His army slept along the gleaming sand,
Awaiting the great battle of the morn.
Out of the sultry sky there seemed to fall
Great drops of blood, and like a lonely ghost
The pale sea cried, while in the purple west
A star emerged not seen before of man,
Outshining silvery Sirius and red Mars.
And phantom armies ran upon the sea,
And in the forest was a noise of wings.

To Sigurd as he slept there came a dream
Of a sad, shining Angel with veiled eyes
And sable wings that rustled drearily,
Like autumn leaves blown to the doors of men ;
And bending down she spake. In the hushed night
Her solemn words were sadder than the call

Of Roland's horn resounding in the hills
 Of Roncevaux, when with his failing might
 He blew a farewell blast to Charlemain.

And thus the Angel spake : " Make ready, Prince,
 I am the holy harbinger of Death.
 The Angel of the battle, I appear
 To men that unto Death are consecrate.
 To-morrow in the battle we shall meet ;
 Amid the lightnings of the broken swords
 Thou shalt behold unveiled my terrible eyes,
 And hear my fatal bugle-call ; and I
 Will bear thee swiftly through the starry ways
 Of night, and trackless space ; but thou must first
 Give ear unto the message of the gods.

" Because thou hast been glorious in thy life,
 Flinched not, nor swerved from the tremendous task :
 Because thou hast endured calamity,
 And grief proportioned to thy mighty heart,
 The gods have stored a certain gift for thee.
 To-morrow thou shalt die. But though the gods
 Are impotent to join the severed thread,
 They bid thee choose the manner of thy life
 For all eternity."

The angel sang

Of high Valhalla where the heroes dwell.

"A wondrous light shines in the Warriors' hall,

And quiring stars intone their morning song.

Say, wilt thou soar to loud Valhalla's hall,

And take thy place among the vanished kings?

There shouldst thou drain the cup that overcomes

All eating care, disheartening weariness,

Anguish and memories, and heals the soul."

Then Sigurd lifted his kind sea-grey eyes

And smiled most sadly, as an aged Queen,

Who once had seemed a dazzling garden-flower,

Smiles wistfully to see her grandchild weave

A coronal of daisies and wild grass.

And Sigurd to the Angel answered: "No:

For in the phantom feast, although the cup

Should drown the memory of mournful things,

Though steeped in slumberous ease, the restless soul

Would in her dream uneasily regret;

And, as a vision captive in the brain

Lies furled and folded, so the past would dwell

Within the present. My desire would seek

The shadowy years that beckon like far lights,

The glimmering days I could not quite recall,

The past I might not utterly forget.
Moreover her whom I have loved on earth,
Brunhilda, in Valhalla would not dwell.
And how without her could I dwell in bliss?"

And then her voice grew gentle as a flute
Blown o'er the levels of a glassy lake
At twilight. "Wouldst thou the dominion
Of earthly paradises, pleasant fields,
And chaliced lilies and white asphodel?
There are the orchards of immortal fruits,
Lands ever golden with ungarnered corn,
And yellow roses teeming with brown bees.
Like stars in a deserted firmament,
Thou and Brunhilda shining will abide
By crystal streams and cool melodious woods,
Where nightingales and fireflies never leave
The aisles of dusk; or near some shadowed pool
Starred with the water-lilies' golden shrines."
And Sigurd smiled, "Nay, but the past would rise
And drown in tears our unforgetting souls.
As when the moon, a luring sorceress,
Casting enchantment on the stealthy tide
Compels the salt and bitter flood to creep

And nestle in the inlets of the world,
 And fringe the darkling beaches with pale surf;
 Thus round the island of our blissfulness
 The envious flood of memory would rise.
 Soon should we pine in listless apathy,
 And yearn in inconsolable regret."

The angel questioned Sigurd once again:
 "Wouldst thou another world wherein to love,
 Labour and struggle on the battlefields
 Of old, and win the crown of bitter leaves?
 Taste the fleet minute, dizzy and divine,
 Of rapture, and then feel the hand of Fate
 Withdraw the chalice from unsated lips?
 The agony of parting, and the years
 Of treachery and falsehood? the dark web
 Of poisonous deceit encompassing
 The love not slander nor the tongues of men
 Nor power of Gods might else have overcome?
 Wouldst thou renew thy love, to be betrayed
 And fall beneath calamity once more?"

Then before Sigurd, like a pageant, passed
 The ghosts of all the ancient troubled years.
 He saw the forest where, a careless child,

He lived in a green cave, while rustling leaves
And sighing branches made a cradle song;
He saw the tall trees shiver in the dawn,
And heard the dewy matins of the lark;
He trampled meadows of anemones,
White crocus fields and lilies of the valley,
Which paved with ghostly silver the dim floor
Beneath the dome of Dawn, until they gleamed
At sunrise through a cloud of mist and dew,
As tapers through a veil of incense burn.

Once more he wandered through the coverts green.
And mocked the blackbird on his hemlock flute;
Through golden drowsy noons in the deep grass
He lay half sleeping, and yet half aware
Of woodland sounds and the delicious noise
Of summer; the warm droning insect-hum,
Cuckoo and calling dove, and the cool glimpse
Of speckled fishes in the running stream.
And when the Twilight made the woodways dim
And veiled the skies with a mysterious pall
Of emerald, he would seek a dark recess
Of leaves and moss, to sleep, while overhead

Hesperus quivered in the liquid sky
And nightingales made music to the moon.

He saw again the years of wandering :
The travel over many lands and seas,
The years of service for an alien King,
And at the last Brunhilda on the hill,
Encompassed with a ring of snow-white fire.
Once more he kissed the sleeping Queen to life
And caught the splendour of her opening eyes.
And in that daylight all the fire grew dim.
And then a vision of the lagging years
Revealed the mystery and all the threads
Close-woven in the tangled loom of Fate—
By reason of what spell unwittingly
He won Brunhilda for an alien King.
At length the awakening from the trance, the dawn
Of sunless morning and the huge despair.

Thus, in a dim procession, passed the years,
The crowded years of his tormented life.
And Sigurd said to the angel, " I have loved
Once, and for ever, and in eternity.
Such love as this can never be again.

Though I were to be born in a new shape,
And banished to the furthest star of Heaven,
And though I drank of the oblivious wave,
Yet if I met my love again, my soul
Would recognise and clasp her, soul to soul.
Then like to exiled angels we should seem,
Or children banished from the blissful years
Of childhood, and returning there anew
After long toil, not able to regain
The childish soul, nor find the old delight.
I that have battled though my soul despaired,
And loved with love more great, more sad than death,
I that have borne irreparable wrong,
Which ages of bright bliss cannot repair ;
I, knowing that the hour of Fate has come,
Would fain at last possess the whole of peace.
Let me be drenched in Death's divinest dew,
Let me be cradled in immensity,
Let me inherit all oblivion
And the impregnable night of the dumb grave,—
The night unvisited by any star,
The sleep unvexed by any wandering dream.
Then shall I be rewarded with the void,
The inviolable darkness and the dust,

The secrecy, the silence, and the sleep
Unbroken by the struggling pangs of morn."

So Sigurd chose.

The morrow in the fight

He beheld silver armour and the eyes
Unveiled and terrible. Now once again
He tasted rapture dizzy and divine
And knew the Gods had heeded his one prayer.
Then the strange star not seen before of man
Sank in the inland sea as Sigurd died.

And somewhere in the vastness Sigurd sleeps.

PARIS, 1899.

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